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**RACE** and **RACE**

the

lutheran Church

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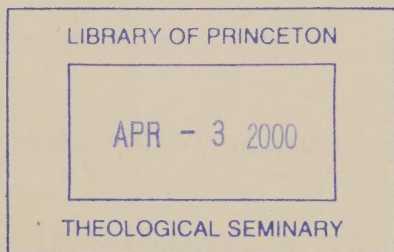
Kraabel, Alf M.

Grace and race in the  
Lutheran Church



# Grace and Race in the Lutheran Church

Alf M. Kraabel



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## FOREWORD

"Grace and Race . . ." The rhythm of these words ought to produce a harmony. The serious race discords in our day, even in church circles, result from gross misunderstanding of the rich meaning of Grace.

This brochure has been prepared to help restore the rhythm and the harmony in our souls and in the Church. It comes at this time as a response to many requests for a Lutheran contribution to the current mission-study theme: "Christ, the Church, and Race." The Rev. Alf M. Kraabel, its author, is our beloved colleague on the staff of the Division of American Missions of the National Lutheran Council, responsible for "Intercultural Outreach." He has had ample opportunity to study the field, and his contribution deserves the attention of every thoughtful reader. Pastor Kraabel's theological inclination is reflected in the outline, which follows the three articles of the Creed: Creation, Redemption, Sanctification.

The Lutheran stamp is apparent and intentional; this material is offered as a Lutheran supplement to the excellent general material prepared on the subject by Friendship Press. The official statements of the Lutheran Church bodies is a helpful compilation.

We have often said that the outreach to people whom the Lutheran Church has heretofore neglected is one of its challenging missionary frontiers of today. It is our hope that this paper may be an aid in conquering this frontier in the light of God's Word, and in obedience to His Will.

—H. CONRAD HOYER

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## Grace and Race

The Church was born out of a sermon and a sacrament as a non-segregated, all-inclusive, intercultural and interracial Church. God brought it into being: exactly the kind of Church that He wanted, one in which peoples of every color and culture would be welcome, and in which they would certainly feel at home. The story as recorded in the Book of Acts (Acts 2) tells us that Peter preached the sermon and, together with the other disciples, administered the Sacrament. Three thousand people were baptized and became charter members of the Church. Luke, telling the story, emphasizes the all-inclusiveness of this first Christian congregation, with Jews and Gentiles, “whites” and “non-whites” in its membership. At least fourteen nations and countries were represented, and that many different languages were spoken. Cultures, traditions and backgrounds from these nations gave to this first Church a truly all-inclusive character.

Luke also makes the point that these differences are not to be ignored or disregarded; rather they are to be recognized as contributing to the strength and fullness of the Church. In their relationship to their Lord, and in their fellowship with each other these people experienced a strange and unique oneness. It is not incidental that we are told repeatedly that these people acted in many varying situations “with one accord.” The Church, as it came out of the hand and the heart of the Eternal Father, was a Church where anyone who named the Name of Christ would be warmly

accepted; the color of a man's skin, the shape of his head, the texture of his hair had nothing to do with his relationship to his fellow Christians, nor to his Lord.

### ***Another Picture***

There is another picture of the Church in the New Testament; this one is in the seventh chapter of the Book of Revelation. It is still God's Church, but with this very significant difference. Now it is the perfect Church, beset by neither the failures nor the foibles of sinful, stupid men. All sin and evil have been done away with forever. The Church is now what Christ died to make it. The Church is now everything that an Almighty, All-knowing, Gracious God wanted it to be, the eternal, triumphant Church of the Eternal, Triumphant Christ! And it is still intercultural, interracial, all-inclusive and non-segregated.

Here is the victorious Church, gathered together from every land, every age, every race; peoples of all the world who have been reached and won by the Gospel of God's grace; peoples of every language, every color, every culture, every class, gathered around the throne of the Lamb. Many are the differences among these people. That one thing which they all have in common is that which binds them together for all eternity—they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

The Church in its infancy knew nothing of racial or cultural discrimination. The Church in its eternal triumph knows nothing of segregation, exclusiveness, superiority. And the Church of the Living Christ, true to its God-given mission in this era between the Cross and the Crown, must never stain itself with these sins of segregation and exclusiveness. To do so would be to try to take over the privileges of God and to legislate people out of the Church and out of the fellowship of the Church because of the color of their skin, the shape of their nose, the texture of their hair. It must be said simply, plainly and repeatedly: discrimination and prejudice which seek to deny church membership to anyone because of

color, culture, class or caste is an insult to God, and stands condemned as contrary to His Holy and Gracious Will.

### ***The Light of the Spirit Is Needed***

Yet this too must be said: that which determines whether or not a person is a Christian is not the distance he has traveled, but the direction in which he is going. Or, to put it another way—justification, not sanctification, is that which establishes our standing in the sight of God. While it is therefore right to say that the practice of racial discrimination is unchristian on the basis of Scripture, it would not be true to say that anyone who yet believes in the inferiority of one race and the superiority of another race and puts that opinion into practice in one way or another is, therefore, not a Christian. Nor would it be true to say that a congregation which officially or otherwise practices segregation, refusing full communicant membership to anyone because of color or race, is, because of that, no longer a Christian congregation. Christian congregations which practice the delusion of racial superiority, as well as Christian people guilty of this sin, need to let the light of God's Spirit lead them away from this misconception of the Church, its teachings and its ministry. They stand in grave danger of missing much of the joy and gladness of unselfish, heroic Christian living, for He Whom they deny to others they themselves could very easily lose. To see God's truth in the matter of race relations we must search the Christian Gospel. The place to begin is at the center of that Gospel. When attitudes and actions move out from a center which is fixed and true, they are in harmony with the mind and purpose of God. And at the center is Grace.

### ***Grace Is God's Kind of Love***

Grace is God's kind of love. Never can anything which is of God be grasped fully by the mind of man. Never is the Creator fully understood by His creatures. The Grace of God is too immense and awesome fully to be defined in human language. Still, even by



sinful humans, some definition must be made. Grace is at once an act of God on behalf of sinners and an attitude of His toward them. Grace is that element of love in God's essential character which moves Him to act toward us as He does, *not at all* because we are lovable, but because He *is* loving, because He is love, because He loves us—every sinful one of us. This love of His toward sinners who deserve nothing but His wrath and contempt is Grace.

Isaiah writes of its significance and meaning when he tells us (Isaiah 43:25) that God forgives us our sins and remembers no more our trespasses *FOR HIS OWN SAKE*, that is, not because of any deserving on our part, but because of something which is in Him, something because of which He forgives and forgets. This "something" is Grace, God's kind of love. Because He *LOVES* us He does these things which we can never deserve on our own. In another very familiar passage (Isaiah 40:2) the Prophet uses the expression—"her iniquity is pardoned." The word "pardon" used here actually means that God, in forgiving the sinner, restores that sinner to His own favor, *FOR HIS OWN SAKE*.

Paul, too, writes of Grace, in a passage which has been called the most profound thought ever to enter the mind of man: God "made him (Christ) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him (Christ) we might become the righteousness of God" (II Corinthians 5:21). Paul tells us that God, of His own will and for His own purpose, made His Son, Whom He loves, to be *SIN*—which He hates—in order that He (God) might make us righteous and acceptable in His sight. The meaning is something like this: God made Jesus to be what I am in order that He might make me to be what Jesus is! This is *GRACE*, God's love—active, creative, always searching for all men, everywhere, all the time! It is by Grace that we are saved through faith. Because of His Grace God determined that He would accept from the sinner, from you and from me, something in place of the righteousness which we had lost, and which we could of ourselves never recover. And that something which God determined to accept is something which God deter-

mined to give, namely *FAITH*. So we come to accept God's acceptance of us, that is, we actually believe that God does restore us to His own favor, for His own sake. That because of which God does all of this for all of us is the *GRACE* of God.

### ***Adoption Is by Grace***

The unique and essential character of Grace: that is, God acting on His own initiative and for His own sake, is well illustrated in Paul's use of the word "adoption" (Romans 8:23). A young husband and his wife had been married for several years, but were without children. They made a momentous decision, in terms of their own wishes, desires and inclinations. They decided to adopt one or two children. They did not know any infants available for adoption, but they took the first steps by consulting the local Lutheran Welfare Agency. It happened that the children whom they finally made their own through adoption had not yet been born. Two truths are here very evident and shed much light on the meaning of the Grace of God. The young married couple arrived at their decision *for their own sake!* They certainly could not have had the welfare of the two children in mind, since the children had not yet been born. They acted on their own initiative and for their own sake. The second truth is equally significant, the relationship which finally was fixed—that of parents and children, and fixed in the sight of the law, and in the sight of the Church—rests completely and altogether on an act of the foster parents. The two children had nothing whatever to do with setting up that relationship. All the necessary processes were completed without their knowledge or consent. It is true, of course, that when the children reach the age of maturity they can, if they so desire, repudiate completely the adoption relationship and can reject the foster parents as their legal and moral guardians. Thus it is with God and His Grace. He has chosen us for His own sake, and our relationship with Him rests altogether and only on an act of His. Until we consciously and knowingly repudiate God and His salvation, or

until that relationship perishes from neglect and carelessness, we are His children and as Paul says to the Corinthians—"By the grace of God I am what I am" (I Corinthians 15:10).

### ***Race Is of God Too!***

Though the word "Grace" is not easy to define, no responsible person has suggested that it be discarded. Not so with the word "race." The experts in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have suggested that the word "race" be no longer used, and that the phrase "ethnic groups" be substituted. Despite that recommendation, however, it is likely that the word will continue to be used, and it is advisable, therefore, to attempt some definition.

### ***Three Kinds of People***

Most of us believe that there are three primary races of mankind, and many of us think that these three different races have their origin in the three sons of Noah—Shem, Ham and Japheth. The names by which we speak of the three groups, however, do not come to us from the names of these three sons. The Caucasoid people are those who are thought of as "white," and the name comes originally from those who lived in or near the Caucasus Mountains in eastern Europe. Most of the people in America and Europe are Caucasians, and there are other smaller groups in other parts of the world. The Caucasians constitute not more than one-third of the present world's population. We who are white are in the minority! The second group is called the Mongoloid people: they are usually identified as "Orientals"—the Chinese, the Japanese, the Indians and others. They are normally of a darker skin color, and have other distinguishing facial characteristics: slanted eyes and, almost always, black hair. The third major group is the Negroid, made up of those who have dark brown or black skin and frequently, though not always, such facial characteristics as the flat nose, the enlarged nostrils, the large protruding lips. There

could be mentioned a fourth group, those in the more remote parts of the world where, over the centuries, racial intermarriage has been practiced; these people have characteristics from two or three of the major groups. Of course, down through the years and throughout the whole world, peoples of one race have married those of another with the result that the differences between these three groups are fast fading out. In fact, there are those who think that it is a part of God's plan that eventually all racial differences will disappear, and the world will know but one race.

### ***The Integrity of the Church***

As far as the Church is concerned, the problem of the origins, the characteristics, and the history of the several racial groups is not of primary importance. The question usually presents itself in far simpler form, though that simpler form is by no means the total problem. When peoples of other backgrounds, other colors, other cultures, other family habits and different ways of behaving, even, perhaps, of other foods and smells, move into our community, what are we as Christians supposed to do? Are we to ignore them? Do we have to go over and call on them? Must they be invited to join our Church? Are we supposed to let them kneel with us at the Communion table? This is the simpler form of the matter, though a very great deal more is involved. When these questions are being thrown around among the people of the congregation, emotions become involved, feelings rise quickly and the situation can quite easily get out of hand. More is involved though than just the question of whether an individual or a family not "our kind of people" ought to be asked to join the Church. The very character of the Church is involved. The integrity of the Church as God's hand-maid, as the dwelling place of the Most High, as the Body of Christ and the Communion of Saints is in question. Our Lord's words to Peter come to mind here: "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). Our Lord has never surrendered the Lordship of His Church. It is still His Church. He and He alone is the

Builder. He and He alone determines policy and practice in matters involving the Gospel and its witness to all peoples.

### ***Our Real Concern***

In this connection another word ought to be said. There is a very great deal of earnest discussion throughout our land and throughout the whole world about the race question. The Supreme Court decision of May 1954 has served to focus added attention and concern on the problem. The reactions in certain Southern States, the reports which continue to come from South Africa, the almost unlimited number of books, pamphlets, and articles, all dealing with some aspect of this pressing problem make it imperative that the Church address itself anew to the matter. But that which motivates the Church, that to which the Church is seeking to respond, is the Word and the Will of God. Long before the current furor, the acts and attitudes of the Church in the matter of race relations were determined by what is contained in that Truth which is always current, the Word of God. The Church does not "figure out" its position in this matter or in any other; it does not piece together a composite statement from the majority's opinion nor from the feelings of its living leaders or "first men." In any situation, the true Church may move only in that way which is laid out for it by God. When it stands still, when it does not move in the right direction, when it does not go as far as God commands, the Church is no longer true. In this matter of race relations, then, the Church seeks to do what is right because, since it is the Church, it seeks always to know and to do the Will of God.



## I Will Make Me a Man

If we of the Church are seeking to know and to do what God wants us to know and to do in the matter of reaching out to peoples of other races and other cultures, then we should begin by asking about God's Will as He has shown it to us in the creation of this world, and the people who live here. For some of us the question will be—"What should we do as members of a Christian congregation with the Negroes who have moved near the Church, or with the Indians who have been trying to build new homes and new lives in our neighborhood?" To some it will mean, "What shall we do with the white people, perhaps even the 'poor, white trash' who have moved into the houses and homes where most of the community is Negro?" When we ask these questions we are often driven to ask other questions—"Where did the Negro come from?" "Why is the Indian, the Mexican, the Oriental, the Jew?" "Did God make them that way?" "Does He want His world peopled with many different kinds of folks?" Or, as someone has dared to ask—"Did God make a mistake?" "Did something go wrong somewhere so that there are these different kinds of people in the world, and because of that there is trouble and hatred among those who should belong together as God's children?" And, what is even worse, "Has this whole matter gotten so out of hand that even God can do nothing about it?" There are good, solid answers to most of our questions. We can be sure that if we ask sincerely and with an honest intention to know and do what is right, we will find the

answers. If, however, we ask questions in the hope that we can find further support for our own prejudiced and mixed up ideas, we will perhaps discover that such answers will not be found.

### ***This Is God's World***

This is God's world! He made it. He created it. He did so for His own purpose and as an act of His own will. No one asked Him to do so. He consulted none of us. It is His world, and He is still sovereign and supreme. And God made man—He created him, not incidentally, nor accidentally, but as an act of His own free will. Man is the crown of God's creation. There is something thrilling, something which brings us very close to God's intent and purpose in the words of a Negro pastor, who, paraphrasing the words of God, said—"And God said 'I will make me a man'." God did not say "many men, many kinds of people." "I will make Me a man and he shall father the whole human race. From him shall come the generations which shall inhabit the world and subdue it. This man whom I shall make, I shall make in My own image." Nothing is said in describing Adam and Eve except that they were to be made in the image of God. There are descriptions of one kind or another of the animals, the birds, the trees which God made. God made different kinds of animals, different kinds of fish and fowl, different kinds of flowers and birds and trees. But He made only ONE kind of man—Adam, and from Adam, and like him, came Eve. Though it became necessary for God to destroy the human race because of their wickedness and sin, He did not completely wipe out every last remnant of the descendants of Adam. Noah and his family were all descendants of Adam, and as a result of the flood Noah became a second father to the whole human race. From these two simple truths of Genesis come a number of definite answers to our questions.

### ***Same Creator—Same Parents***

All men, the sum total of all peoples who now live or who have

lived in this world (and none would venture to estimate the total), all have the same Creator. Every single individual in the whole world, now living or dead, of every nation and tribe and peoples, has come into the world through one and the same biological process, created and established of God. All men have this together—they have the same Creator. Even as all have the same Creator—so all have the same parentage. There was only one first man, one first woman. Neither of them was born into the world as infants. Both of them were created as full-grown, mature, adult people. Since then, no other person has been so created. Noah and his family came into the world as have all men, through physical birth from their parents. So all men have the same parentage, are of the same blood. Paul, in his great speech to the people of Athens, recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the Book of Acts, reminded his hearers of this basic truth when he said—"He himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. And he made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation" (Acts 17:25b-26).

This basic and essential unity of the human race is supported by accepted findings of science and medicine. There are, for instance, no racial blood types. There is no German blood, no Indian blood, no French blood. The blood of a Negro is no different from the blood of a Jew. The blood of an Oriental is no different from the blood of an Eskimo. Whatever may be the outward differences in body size, color, weight and so forth, there is an essential sameness, an essential unity, so that it is both Scripturally and scientifically asserted that man is one. A pint of blood taken from a Negro could very well save the life, even of the most rabid supporter of complete segregation. A cornea transplanted from the eye of a Jew could readily give sight to a determined anti-semitist. A bone graft involving an African and a native Hollander would be effective. There are four different blood types and all of them are found in all peoples of whatever color, culture, or class.

### ***What the Lutheran Church Has to Say***

Our Lutheran Churches have affirmed and re-affirmed their acceptance of this basic Biblical doctrine. The United Lutheran Church in America, through its Board of Social Missions, adopted a statement on Human Relations in 1952, two years, incidentally, before the epoch-making decision of the United States Supreme Court. The statement of the Board of Social Missions was re-affirmed by the United Lutheran Church at its Harrisburg Convention in 1956. The very first statement in this excellent presentation of Evangelical Christianity's position reads—"God the Father is the Creator of all mankind. We are made in His likeness. In the light of the common creation of all men, differences in physical characteristics or social background are only of incidental importance." This position is substantially that of all the participating bodies of the National Lutheran Council, and with this position the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is in full agreement. The question arises then—are some races of people inferior to others? Is the Negro essentially and potentially inferior to the White? Did God intend that some people should be so superior to others that there ought to be instinctive barriers between the races? This position has been held and is held today by many people in the Church and out of the Church, in America and elsewhere. Now Scripture allows no support whatever for such an opinion, and science finds itself in full accord with what Scripture has to say. Attempts have been made to establish that the Negro, for instance, is intellectually inferior to the White, and that, although there have been isolated exceptions, in the main, Negroes should not be expected to reach the intellectual levels of white people. Science has completely disproven this point of view. An interesting comment on this question was made by the Jewish editor of a Southern newspaper who said substantially this in a private conversation: "I have a daughter. She was born on a certain day in a certain hospital. That same day another girl was born, and her parents were Gen-

tile. Again that same afternoon, in the same hospital another girl was born, and she was of Negro parents." "I can never believe," said the Jewish editor, "that God intended that any one of these three girls should be either inferior to or superior to one or both of the others." If it is true that the educational level of the American Negro, the American Indian, the Oriental among us is lower than that of the American White, it is equally true that this is the result of an inferior educational process with which the presumably inferior peoples have had to be content.

### ***What About the Curse of Noah?***

There are three incidents in the Old Testament which have been used in support of the unscriptural position that God intended that some people should be forever inferior to other people. Two of these incidents are in the nature of curses. The most familiar one is that of Noah (Genesis 8:20-27). This event is most frequently used to support such false opinions. A fair study of the incident in the life of Noah will reveal these simple truths: (1) Noah and not God pronounced the curse. (2) Noah's competence is certainly in question since he was either under the influence of liquor or was recovering from a drunken orgy when the curse was made. (3) And nothing is said about the color of anyone's skin. A competent student of these matters has recently said that no recognized authority in African affairs would ever assert that the great bulk of the Negro peoples are Hamites.

The second incident is also in the nature of a curse and is recorded of Joshua after he had been deceived by the Hivites (Joshua 9). Here again nothing is said of color, nor of culture. In neither of these two instances can acceptable support be found for any theory of racial inferiority. The third instance is that of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). Here again there is no basis whatever on which to justify the assertion that it is within the will and purpose of God that some peoples be destined by divine decree to remain in a permanently inferior status.



### ***Climate and Color***

Any attempt to arrive at an acceptable answer to the question about the various skin colors, the differences in bone structure, hair texture and related matters may seem to be rather futile. Of this we can be certain: it is apparent that such matters are not of commanding importance to our Heavenly Father. Had they been of real concern He would have dealt with them in His revealed Word. Since they have not been dealt with in Holy Scripture, it is safe to assume that we need not be overly concerned about them. However, there are some factors in the matter to which attention can be called. It is known that early tribes of men were largely confined to limited living areas. Within these narrow limits they developed certain customs, habits and patterns of life. They married within the limits of their own peoples, and through the generations which followed, certain physical characteristics became more and more prominent until within such peoples textures of hair, colors of skin, shapes of noses and lips, cheek-bones and other facial parts became quite fixed. It is likewise reasonable to assume that not only isolation but climate, geography and other factors played important parts in producing pronounced physical characteristics. Dr. T. A. Kantonen, Professor of Systematic Theology at Hamma Divinity School in Springfield, Ohio, said recently in an address to Lutheran pastors and lay-people, attending a School on Race Relations at Wittenberg College: "The most poignant illustration of man's sinful distortion of the Creator's good purpose is afforded by his use of skin color as a basis of discrimination. The connection between skin color and natural environment has been known since ancient times. Dark-skinned people are natives of tropical regions and light-skinned people of temperate and cold zones. According to a view held widely by modern scientists, the explanation lies not in heat but in intensity of light. The active rays of the sun are beneficial to man in small quantities, harmful in large ones. Thus skin pigment appears to act as a ray filter deriving its efficiency from the depth of color. If

this explanation is true, skin color is a remarkable device of the providence of God in caring for His children. What perversion, then, it is to twist the symbol of the resourcefulness of divine love into an instrument for despising the object of that love."

To what extent God's providential action can be isolated and made to apply to the many differences of color, physique, texture within the human family cannot be positively determined. But of this we may be certain, and in these known facts we may rejoice—God is the Almighty Father, Creator of heaven and earth. All men have a common Creator, God the Almighty. All men have a common ancestry, first Adam and then Noah. No race is inherently superior or inferior to any other race. There is no such thing as a "pure" race. That which all men have in common so far outweighs that which may appear to separate them that Scripture takes no cognizance of external variations, but holds firmly to this truth that all men are one, of one family, of one God.



## For the Healing of Nations

If the unity and oneness of the human family is established by the fact that all men have a common Creator and that all men have a common parentage, it is further established in the fact that all men are sinners, and that there are no sinners except the human family. There is not only a oneness about men, there is a unique oneness. All men are essentially alike, yet completely different from all other creation. The Scripture is in complete agreement in all its many parts in declaring that man is a sinner, and that his sin has alienated him from his God and Maker. The story of the Fall in the third chapter of Genesis is repeatedly affirmed, throughout the Old Testament and throughout the New. Scripture knows of no individual who has escaped the blighting curse of sin, and human history has produced no individual for whom complete sinlessness has been established. To whatever extent certain peoples have sought to claim superiority and to whatever extent they have been able to maintain that fiction, no peoples, at no time, and in no place, have ever sought to claim perfection. "Crows are black the world over," says the Chinese proverb, and by that is meant that men everywhere carry within themselves the blackness, the darkness, the ignorance, which are the fruit of sin.

### ***A "Parvenu" Is an Upstart***

Therefore the attempt to maintain the innate superiority of any race or group of peoples would be laughable, were it not so utterly

tragic. None are so blind as they who will not see, and one of the aftermaths of racial prejudice is just this, that the greater the insistence on racial superiority the greater the blindness to truth and fact, and the more difficult the attempt to provide a remedy. Dr. Herbert J. Muller, a recognized authority in the social sciences, writes: "It (i.e. the effort to see in perspective not only our nation, but our civilization) involves still another contradiction of our age: that we have now a far wider view of history than our ancestors, a view in which we can appreciate the astonishing variety of human aspiration and achievement, and that we have also developed stronger prejudices than any other civilization, raised new barriers to understanding and community. *The Ugliest Example Is Racial Prejudice*. (Italics ours.) Even though few reputable historians continue to find the key to civilization in the innate superiority of the White, the Nordic, or the Anglo-Saxon race, this vulgar theory still colors the thought and feeling of a great many men who do not openly commit themselves to it. In the Anglo-Saxon world, indeed, feeling about color is so strong and deep that men assume it is instinctive, and even the tolerant are likely to be repelled by the thought of racial intermarriage; whereas such feeling has actually been rare in history. All peoples have been pleased to regard themselves as superior, but few have identified their superiority with the color of their skin. And since the great majority of the world's population are what Americans call colored, and consider naturally inferior, it becomes necessary to repeat that this attitude is strictly a prejudice, inconsistent with the principles of democracy and Christianity, and with no scientific basis whatever. Biologically, races are not pure or sharply defined, racial differences are only a small fraction of man's common inheritance, and the clearest differences—as between white skin and yellow, long heads and broad, straight hair and kinky—have no clear importance for survival. Historically, mixed races have usually produced the golden ages, all races have proved capable of civilization, and no race has led the way throughout history. The 100 per cent



American today is a parvenu who owes 99 per cent of his civilization to a mongrel antiquity." \*

### ***All Have Been Redeemed***

Scripture establishes beyond all doubt the essential oneness of man in his creation, and in his parentage. With these truths science and the total experience of the human race are in fullest accord. To this evidence of the oneness of all men there must be added the Scriptural witness to the sinfulness of all mankind. In these three aspects, then, it is determined that man is ONE.

A fourth basic truth must now be recognized: In Christ Jesus all men have been redeemed. It is at this point that the Christian finds his most compelling reason for understanding fully and following completely the Biblical truth in this matter of racial prejudice and exclusiveness. It is to this point that the Christian Church must constantly return to review the basic teachings of the Gospel and to discover new applications of eternal truths in the light of the changing frontiers of its ministry and its evangelistic outreach.

The Gospel in its fullness, the story of the redemption of mankind, has direct bearing on the attitude of the Christian and of the Church toward all men. The Scripture certainly supports the assertion that, were there now or had there ever been a single human person who had no need for the redeeming act of Christ, the whole revelation of God would lose its authoritative appeal to mankind. The Scripture further supports the claim that were not God's love for all men, it would be for no man. The oneness of man is supported in the Scripture by the universality of the Gospel. Several aspects of this basic truth have an immediate bearing on the matter at hand.

\*Dr. Muller is a graduate of, and a former teacher at Cornell University. He has lectured in Europe, was for a time attached to the United States Department of State, and is presently on the Faculty of Purdue University. His book—"The Uses of the Past" from which this quotation is taken was originally printed in England by the Oxford University Press, and has been reprinted in America by Mentor Books. The quotation is found on page 44 in the Mentor Books edition. Used by permission.

God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4). As insistent as is the Scripture in asserting the total sinfulness of the human race and as determined as is Scripture to allow none to escape the condemnation of his own sin, equally insistent and determined is Scripture in declaring that the Grace of God in Christ is for all men and that no one, to whatever depths of iniquity sin may have driven him, is beyond the saving power of the Gospel of the Cross. The history of the Missions of the Church bear out this Scriptural truth. There has never been found a people, a tribe, a nation for whom the preaching of the Cross has been completely ineffective. However difficult may have been the missionary thrust in many lands and among many peoples, always there has been, eventually, a fruit of that ministry and always there have been those who have been brought into the Community of Saints, which is the Church.

### ***The Purpose of the Gospel***

The basic purpose of the Gospel likewise bears impressive testimony to the truth that the redemptive purpose of God includes all men, without exception. The Gospel does not propose to save the individual for the individual's sake, and then having achieved such a salvation to go on to the task of “saving” some other person. The clearly defined purpose of the Gospel is to set all men free from the bondage of sin so that they may be united in Christian fellowship, one with another and all with God. It is, therefore, not enough to offer the Gospel to peoples of other cultures and color, and at the same time to deny to them the privilege of associating on equal terms within the fellowship of the redeemed. The Church cannot discharge its evangelical responsibility by providing a “mission”-type outreach to peoples of other colors and backgrounds if, in so doing, it seeks to prevent these very people from identifying themselves with the Church itself.

### ***The Church Speaks***

Our Lutheran Churches, as well as other Christian communions,

have recognized this truth and have sought constantly to urge it upon the congregations. In a series of resolutions adopted by the American Lutheran Church at its 1956 convention held in Blue Island, Illinois, the following statement is included—"It is the responsibility of each congregation of the American Lutheran Church to minister to the entire neighborhood and area in which it is located. This full ministry of the Law and Gospel includes the Lord's command to love, to seek out, to evangelize, and to minister to all persons and through the power of the Holy Spirit to bring them into full membership in the Church, with all the rights and privileges that inhere in such membership in the Body of Christ . . . Anyone who will respond to the regenerating Gospel should be welcomed into the fellowship of the congregation." With this statement of Scriptural principle all other Lutheran Churches of our land are in full agreement. In some individual instances, it is true, there has been a measure of uncertainty in accomplishing the goal of total community outreach.

Another pertinent point which is part and parcel of the Gospel is this truth—to deny the Gospel to any person because of that person's color, culture, class or caste is to reveal a completely distorted understanding of the Gospel and is to place oneself in great danger of losing that Gospel. One cannot, directly or indirectly, deny Church membership to another person on racial or cultural grounds, without thereby asserting that God Himself is untrue and unfair. To do that would be to sin a great sin, both against God and against man. God, Who insists that He is no respecter of persons, would be accused of partiality and would stand condemned as being no longer God. And this even greater accusation would be justified: if the Gospel and the fellowship inherent in the Gospel can be denied to any person for any reason whatsoever, except that of the person's conscious rejection of the Gospel, then God has compromised with sin, and His whole purpose in sending His Son to die for the salvation of mankind lies under great suspicion.

### **God Became One of Us**

Before God could do anything for us, He had to become one of us! The incarnation, that is, God becoming man, had to take place before the redemption, that is, God dying for the sins of all. This helps us, too, to understand what God wanted to do—to set all of us free from that which separated us from Him and from each other. Since the redemption is for all, the freedom is for all and so—the fellowship is for all.

In this there is much to establish the truth that no man dare deny himself—his friendship and fellowship, encouragement and guidance—to another person, if the salvation of the other person is involved. Luther recognized this truth and gave expression to it in these words: “This is now the mark by which we all shall certainly know whether the birth of Christ is effective in us: if we take upon ourselves the need of our neighbor.” In writing that, Luther could not have been unmindful of the teaching of the parable of the Good Samaritan. John the Beloved surely had something like this in mind when he wrote—“For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (I John 4:20). This makes the question of our attitudes and relationships to peoples of other cultures and colors a very serious matter. It is even suggested in what John has just written that a wrong attitude and a wrong relationship to a Negro, a Jew, an Italian, a Puerto Rican—like not wanting him in the Church, not wanting such people to live in our neighborhood—such an attitude and relationship could make of our own personal Christian profession an empty, hollow, hypocritical thing!

The purpose of the Gospel is not to create and maintain a selective fellowship into which privileged persons are to be invited and from which others, delinquent in certain superficial advantages, are to be excluded. *The purpose of the Gospel is to create a new fellowship, a new humanity into which all are not only invited but for which all are earnestly sought by none other than God Himself.*

### ***Jesus Practiced Good Race Relations***

Our Lord revealed His mind and spirit in the matter of human relations, not only by the content He Himself gave the Gospel, but as well by what He practiced in His relations with people. He ate with publicans and sinners, and chatted with women of ill repute. He allowed no social, cultural, racial barriers to restrict His redemptive concern for all sorts and conditions of men. He reached into Idumea and beyond the Jordan. He moved purposefully into the region about Tyre and Sidon. He accepted an invitation to remain with the Samaritans, and it was with a Samaritan woman, whose personal and marital affairs deserved His severest censure, that He talked about the nature of true worship. He publicly commended the faith of a Roman soldier as being superior to any found elsewhere in the whole of Israel.

### ***So Did Peter, Paul, Philip, and Others***

Those to whom He entrusted the Gospel and the ministry of that Gospel moved out into the world with that same spirit of concern for all men. Peter, it is true, needed a special revelation of God's purpose before he admitted that the Gospel was for all men. But Paul, himself a Jew, and one steeped in the tradition and culture of the Jewish people, declares that God chose him in order that in him the Gentiles might see the Lord Christ. Philip responded immediately to the Spirit's call and left a prosperous and outstandingly successful ministry in the city of Samaria. He faced the discomforts, the inconveniences, and the dangers of a long desert journey. He preached Christ to the Ethiopian Eunuch, and the first non-Jew entered the Christian Church. As our parents, their parents, moved out of the kingdom of darkness into His marvellous light, as you and I, led by the Spirit, were ushered into His Kingdom, we followed in the footsteps of this man of Ethiopia, a non-Jew, a Negro!





## Lord and Giver of Life

In this whole matter of the Church's concern for people of all colors and cultures that which is really at issue is the very character and the integrity of the Church itself. There has been, these past years, a remarkable increase in the concern of the Church for itself, a concern which seeks to understand the nature of the Church, the purpose of the Church. This renewed and enlarged interest in the very essentials of the Church is not limited to the larger, more universal character of the Church, but is directed as well to the local congregation. Pastors and people are looking at their own communities with new understanding and new courage. Particularly in the larger cities they are seeing vast social changes taking place. Old families, resident for years in their neighborhood, are moving out and away. Newer families, largely of different social, racial, cultural backgrounds, are moving in. It should be emphasized, however, that newer people do not move in until older families move out. What shall the congregation do? The record these past years has not been one of which the Church could be proud.

### ***Should Our Church Move?***

Too often a church, failing to understand its own mission and purpose, has abandoned its community, sold its property and moved to other fields. Its decision to do so, it is claimed, is indicated by good counsel, strategy and churchmanship. It must be insisted, however, that the matter is not quite as simple as that.

Has a congregation the right to sell property which, in a real sense, belongs to God, pocket the purchase price, abandon the community, and move into another location in order better to serve the convenience, the pleasure and the social sense of its members? When the property was originally purchased, when the building was first erected, appeal for funds was certainly made on the basis that this is the Lord's work and every gift is, in truth, a gift of gratitude to the Lord. Throughout the years of its ministry in the old community, emphasis was constantly made that this is God's house, this is God's work, we are His people, here to serve Him and minister to people. On what basis, then, can the congregation relinquish its ministry, withdraw its witness in the community, and begin anew and afresh in some other locality? Certainly there are instances when such a move is justified; in most cases, however, a thorough study ought to be made, an honest and courageous facing up to the total responsibility of the Church must be allowed, and the welfare of the Kingdom be recognized as being finally determinative.

To move away from a changing community (although in all probability more people are living in the community under the social changes than lived there before), merely to preserve a kind of culture, a set of traditions, or to avoid too close contact with people who are "different" can never be justified as being in the interests of the Kingdom of God. To take the purchase price of the old property and put it into the building fund for the new church would appear on the surface to be good, long-range planning. In reality however is it not true that to do that adds up to the rather ugly fact that the members of the congregation, being relieved of contributing the amount of money received from the sale of the old property, are profiting personally from such a transaction? All of these questions and others of a similar nature demand that in examining the policies and plans of the congregation, the Kingdom of God must be uppermost in the minds of the people of God.

## ***Again the Church Has Spoken***

Our Lutheran Church Bodies are not unaware of these problems and have taken a courageous position in these matters. The Augustana Church, at its convention in Moorhead, Minnesota, in June of 1956, adopted a statement which includes these two paragraphs—"We again encourage our congregations to include all unchurched persons in their communities in their programs of evangelism without distinction as to color, race or national origin . . . We particularly commend these congregations who have refused to abandon communities where major population shifts have brought large numbers of non-white persons into the vicinity of their churches." Two statements included in the declaration of the American Lutheran Church, referred to previously, are pertinent here: "The Church exists to win men to Christ and to restore lost souls into fellowship with the Father. Its purpose is not to build an institution nor to preserve a man-made cultural heritage. Whenever these latter aims supplant the former, or whenever the opportunities for a significant ministry have diminished because of a reduction in the numbers of people reached, there is no obligation upon the Church as a whole to provide financial support for the work . . . A congregation which wilfully and persistently resists accepting into its membership individuals who in faith and life qualify for membership in a Lutheran congregation, or which stubbornly clings to patterns of segregation and discrimination based solely on man's feelings rather than God's Word, should be the object of the concern of the District President and Executive Committee of the District of which the congregation is a member." The issue is that of whether the purpose of the local congregation is to build an institution or to redeem a community.

## ***The Word "Church"***

The very meaning of the word "Church" will help us understand and will give a new and fresh realization of where the opportunities of the Church lie. Frequently the Church is thought

of as a group of people, large or small, who have come together, largely of their own free will and for their own purposes, however exalted and unselfish such purposes may be. In the original Greek the word rather signifies a body of people which has been summoned out of their homes to come and meet with God, and further that such a summons is inclusive, not exclusive. The Church is an act of God; in a certain sense it is the second incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Church is understood far better as a Person than as an institution, and that Person is Christ Himself. In the New Testament the word is used in several different ways, but essentially the meaning of the word is that of a group of people who have come together because God called them; and they have come together not to listen to their own ideas and opinions but to listen to God and to act in terms of what God tells them.

### ***Man Is Still One!***

If mankind is one because God is the Creator, and because Christ is the Redeemer, so, too, is mankind one because God the Holy Spirit seeks to unite all men, of all colors and cultures and classes into the Body of Christ, which is, in truth, the Church. The Spirit of Christ must therefore prevail in the Christian congregation. Policies and practices involving the very nature of the Church must be arrived at out of the revealed Will and Word of God. If at any time the local congregation must ask, boldly and fearlessly, what God's will is, it must certainly be in the matter of its outreach to peoples and persons for whom Christ died.

That which God created in the garden of Eden was both a community and a place in which that community could come to self-realization. That which was destroyed and perverted by the invasion of sin was both the physical location and the fellowship of His creatures in that location. That which God in Christ seeks to re-create through the Holy Spirit is the new community, the new humanity. No one understood this better than did the Apostle Paul, and nowhere does he speak of it more eloquently than in the



Epistle to the Ephesians, the first chapter. In the center of this new community and as its Eternal Lord and God shall be He Who made Himself one with us, Who died for all men, and Who now seeks the salvation of all men. His Church, which is His body, for which He died because of His love, can never presume to be anything less than what He purposed it should be. Peter tempted our Lord to be less than what He had come to be (Matthew 16:22). "One of the multitude" in Luke 12:14 tempted Jesus to be more than that which He came to be. Often, too, the Church is tempted to be more than it is supposed to be, often tempted to be less than it should be. Both these temptations beset us in this matter of our attitude toward different kinds of people. We who are of the Church dare never deny to our Lord that great joy which is His in knowing that His Church is always the Church, always seeking, always welcoming as He did, men, women and children of every color, culture and class into the full and free fellowship of the redeemed of the Lord.

### ***Membership Is by Grace***

Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is by Grace and by Grace alone. None of us deserve membership in the Christian congregation. None of us have any right, of our own, to belong to His Church. The deacon who has served in that capacity for the last forty years, and who has served faithfully and well has no more right, of his own, to the blessings of Church membership than has the drunken derelict who has besmeared his soul with every sin in the decalogue, but who has, by the miracle of all miracles, been washed in the blood of the Lamb and become a new creature in Christ. And the color of the deacon's skin, or the shape of the derelict's nose, has no bearing whatsoever on the operation of God's Grace which is in Christ.

Our privilege as Christians and children of God is to bear witness. That is our mandate, to be witnesses unto Him, to all people, in all places and at all times. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God

gave the growth," said Paul to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 3:6).

John Franklin is a Negro, a fine young man. He is married and has three children. He lives near a Lutheran Church with a history and a tradition of almost ninety years. John Franklin had never been baptized, never belonged to a Christian Church. The Parish Worker called there, was cordially welcomed. The Parish Interne dropped in some time later, and met with a measure of interest. Then the Pastor called and invited John Franklin to join the adult instruction class. The Pastor explained carefully the purpose of the class, the nature of the class periods, where the class would meet and what lesson material would be used. The result was that when the class met for organization some time later, John Franklin enrolled as a member. He attended every week, regularly and faithfully for about four months. When the class had completed the assigned lesson material, each member was asked privately and individually whether or not he or she wished to confess Christ as Lord and Saviour, be baptized and confirmed and thus to become a member of the Church. All responded favorably except John Franklin. He admitted that he wanted to join the Church, wanted to be baptized, but felt so utterly unworthy of being received into the Church that he could not make himself request Baptism. After further admonition and counsel by the Pastor, John Franklin did request Holy Baptism and Confirmation. At the 11:00 a.m. service on a Sunday not long after, John Franklin was baptized, confirmed and received his first Communion. John Franklin made a sincere confession of his faith and in every way indicated his desire to be numbered among the redeemed of the Lord. Now the question arises and it must be answered frankly and candidly: Who brought this fine young man into the Church? Who moved him to request Holy Baptism, to seek Confirmation and to desire the Blessed Sacrament? If we remember Luther's explanation of the Third Article we will answer, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called

me through the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith; in like manner as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He daily forgives abundantly all my sins, and the sins of all believers, and at the last day will raise up me and all the dead, and will grant everlasting life to me and to all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true."

### ***The Spirit Works***

The Holy Spirit, God Himself, brought John Franklin into His own Church, because God Himself wanted him and because he wanted to be wanted of God! The Pastor didn't bring him, the Interne did not, the Parish Worker did not. True, they witnessed, as is the right and privilege of every Christian. One planted, another watered, but God Himself gave the growth.

### ***Strange But True***

It seems utterly beyond all possibility that another member of the Church, another Christian would insist on the right of voting on whether or not John Franklin should be admitted into the congregation as a member. It would seem even more impossible that any person, any Christian would dare to say, by official vote or otherwise, and, in effect, say to God Himself—"I know You want this man in Your Church. I know that Jesus Christ died so that this man could get into Your Church. I know that the Holy Spirit called him by the Gospel. I know that he has come into the Church in exactly the same way that I became a Church member—but God, I don't want him in my church. He's colored, and he's different from some of the rest of us. So, God, we're going to vote against letting him into the Church and if he gets in anyway, we're going to leave the Church." It does seem so completely beyond all reason that anyone could possibly think or act in that way. And

yet that very thing has happened and to a lesser degree is still happening even now in our Lutheran churches.

That which is at issue is something immense in its meaning and purpose. We are dealing with nothing less than the very eternal purposes and plans of God. We are asking whether or not we have the right to countermand those eternal decisions which God Himself has made, when, before the foundations of the world were laid, He chose us in Christ, and chose all who should name that blessed Name!

## The Church and Its Community

The Book of Revelation was written for the comfort and encouragement of a persecuted Church. There is in this Book that which inspires the Christian Church to a great hope, and to a certainty that He Who is the Lord of Hosts will prevail and the kingdoms of this world shall indeed become the Kingdom of Our Lord and of His Christ. There is also in this Book some very practical and reliable counsel to which the Church in every age would do well to listen. For instance, in the second and third chapters of the book, there are the Seven Letters to the Churches of Asia Minor. These Letters are in the nature of a report to the Churches, a report based on a study of the Churches made by the Head of the Church—none other than the Lord Himself. Many great truths lie readily to hand in a study of the Letters. Three are of particular interest in this chapter.

In the first place, Our Lord in judging, weighing, and examining each of the seven Churches does not use a fixed, rigid standard. Unconsciously we are inclined to do that in our personal and sometimes official evaluation of a congregation. It is thought that each congregation ought to have at least a certain number of auxiliaries. There ought to be at least one women's group, at least one men's group, one or more youth groups, and so forth. It is thought that every congregation should follow certain patterns in its stewardship life, in its evangelistic outreach. Should any congregation fail to have in its stated ministries these activities or something very



much like them, it is presumed that the congregation is falling down and holds little promise of future success. But it is quite possible to carry on a very successful local ministry and yet not have a Ladies' Aid, or a Men's Club, or even a Youth organization.

### ***In Terms of the Community***

The point is that Our Lord has not given us a set of standards to which every congregation must conform. Our Lord teaches us in these Seven Letters that each congregation is to be judged and weighed and evaluated in terms of the community in which it is located. Therefore when a large London Church, after a careful study, comes to the conclusion that the hour of worship best suited for the people whom it serves is six o'clock Sunday evening, it is providing a maximum ministry even though it has no service at 11:00 a.m. on a Sunday morning. This truth which lies within the Letters to the Seven Churches needs to be brought more urgently to the attention of all pastors and people alike. The word of our Confessions that that which constitutes the Church in its essential purpose is the preaching of the Word and the Administration of the Sacraments needs to be emphasized again and again. Another worthwhile point brought out in these Seven Letters is that Our Lord in writing to each congregation uses words, phrases, and local references which are best understood by the Church to which the letter is addressed. Here again, emphasis is put on the local congregation and its responsibility to the community in which it is located.

There is particularly one such reference of more than passing interest. The people of Pergamos are told that they dwell in a city where Satan exercises special authority. The fact that such a city is a very difficult place in which to witness to the Gospel is not overlooked. However, Our Lord does not suggest that it would be more convenient, more desirable to all concerned, if the Pergamos Church would move to a more desirable community. Our Lord says, in effect—"You are living in a city where the influence of evil is great, where it is especially difficult to bear a Christian witness

—and you are to keep on living just there. You are not to dispose of your holdings, personal and otherwise, and look for a more likely field in which to carry on the work. You are to stay where you are. It is in Pergamos that you are to remain and show your Christian faith and life.” The aim of the Church is not to run away from a situation, however distasteful that situation may be. The purpose of the Church is to conquer the situation, to redeem it, and to inject into it the saving salt of the Holy Gospel. Just as it is true of the individual that in losing his life for the Gospel’s sake he will find it, so too is it true of the Church. In losing itself to its community it will find itself and live on to serve God and to redeem men. There were saints in Caesar’s household (Philippians 4:22), men and women living in the very center of paganism, yet maintaining their own spiritual glow, and keeping in touch with their fellow Christians.

### ***A Third Point***

It is the third point, however, which must be recognized as being of greatest importance. Our Lord indicates very definitely that the final test of any congregation’s life and worth is its loyalty to Him Who is the Head of the Church. This loyalty is not only one which can be assured by the proper wording of the constitution of the congregation. Nor is this loyalty satisfied with official pronouncements and confessional assurances. Our Lord created the Church and gave to it a nature and a character without which it is no longer the Church. The very corner-stone of that nature is loyalty to Christ and to His teachings, a loyalty of the individual and a loyalty of the group. Everything else, every other standard of success, of achievement, is false and spurious if it outranks, in the minds of the members of the congregation, the essence of our lives in Christ—faithfulness to Him and to His Word. And faithfulness to Christ and to His Word can never mean less than total acceptance of His concern for all people; which, in turn, must mean that in any congregation of His Church, peoples of any color, culture, class or caste are welcome.

### **Ye Are Salt**

It is to the Church, to the Christians, that Our Lord has said—"You are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13). He did not say that to the Board of Education, to the Park Commissioner, to the Juvenile Court, to the Police Officers. He said that to the Church. And if that means anything it means that the Church must render to its Lord an account of its stewardship in terms of the community in which it is located. Salt does not exist for its own sake. It does not achieve greatness simply by being itself, for itself and by itself. It accomplishes that for which it is used when it loses itself in that which is to be salted. Salt which permeates, finds its way deep down into that to which it has been applied, is good salt. It loses itself, but in doing that rises to its highest point of usefulness.

Most congregations are expected to report to Synodical Authorities at least once a year, submitting statistics and other information relative to the congregation's annual affairs, its budget, its increase in membership and so forth. Would it be amiss to suggest that congregations be required to report on the extent to which the communities they serve have been blessed and benefited by the presence of the Church? Would it not reflect something of the Church's actual influence in the community, the worth of its ministries, the relevance of its interest and concern, if it were required to report on the increase or decrease in the divorce rate, the juvenile delinquency record, the incidence of alcoholism and other social ills?

Synods, as well as local congregations, take a certain amount of pride in announcing and reporting that during the past year membership has increased to this or that extent. Particularly when there is a notable number who have joined the Church is that report quite certain to appear in public print. Why not also report how many families in the community do not belong to the Church, to any Church. Why not indicate, honestly and fearlessly, how many families have not been called on, how many individuals have been almost ignored as the Church has lived out its life in

that community? This, too, reflects something of the inner spiritual tone and temper of the people of the parish. This, too, tells a story which, in terms of the Kingdom, ought to be told.

The Church cannot be indifferent to these affairs in its community. The Church cannot presume to be serving God and ministering to men and yet remain unconcerned about these tremendous social and community evils which curse and corrupt the morals of youth and adult alike. It will not reflect a true understanding of the Church in the light of the New Testament if the congregation continues to find its deepest satisfactions in its capacity to maintain itself as an aggressive, successful Church, in its ability to hold to an enviable record in the discharge of its obligations to its parent body, in its continued success in providing good preaching, the best of music, the little niceties of that peculiar kind of social superiority which seemingly attach themselves to a congregation—and, all the while, the children of the area are actually neglected in their need of a program of Christian education, juvenile delinquency continues to increase, and homes become increasingly cursed with the blight of alcoholism. The Church—to repeat a pregnant, worthwhile phrase—the Church must always be the Church, whatever the cost and whatever the price.

### ***Here's What Happens***

But, now, what happens to congregations in which the sense of responsibility to all the people of the community takes command and the ministries of the Church are directed to the task of redeeming that community? What happens when peoples of other cultures and colors move in and associate on equal terms with the rest of the parish people? What happens when young people of different colors begin to meet together in Luther Leagues, in their social events, in their outings and picnics and Bible Camps?

### ***Interracial Marriages***

The question of interracial marriage is always asked and it should be faced frankly and honestly. That it is used largely as a means of avoiding the real issue is too often apparent. If there are

in any congregations young people of several different racial and cultural backgrounds, such as Negroes, Whites, Puerto Ricans, Orientals, it is very probable that these young people associate together far more frequently and over longer periods of time in the high schools of the community or city than in the Church. The time spent by the average teen-ager in school is far greater than that spent in the Church. If then, a marriage should occur between two such young people, members of the same congregation, it is probable that such a relationship developed within the associations of the high school rather than within those of the Church. Further, while interracial marriages do occur, they occur with far less frequency than is usually believed.

There are four aspects to the problem and each of them can be viewed here briefly. There is the legal aspect. It is still true that marriages between whites and non-whites are prohibited in a number of states of the Union. This number, however, is decreasing, for over these past years several of the State Legislatures have repealed such laws. The Church could not approve of a marriage where the laws of the state prohibits that marriage, even if, in the view of the Church, such a law does not have the support of Scripture. The second aspect is that of the Word of God. There is no prohibition in the Word of God making it contrary to the will of God for a non-white to marry a white person, or for two people of different racial, cultural and social backgrounds to contract a marriage relationship. There is some ground for the assertion that Moses married a Negro. At least the twelfth chapter of the Book of Numbers tells us that Moses, a Jew, married a woman of Ethiopia, and such a woman would be both a non-Jew and a non-white. The third aspect is psychological and has to do with the life-long process of adjustment and accommodation which must be a part of the life of every married couple. To have to contend with deep differences of color and culture in this process of adjustment places unusual demands upon the understanding and patience of both parties. Not that it cannot be done. Not that



it is not being done. However, this aspect of the matter cannot be overlooked. The last aspect is social and has to do with the welfare of the children of such a union, with the families of both the husband and the wife, and with the couple's position in and relation to the community.

### ***Splendid Instances***

There have been and there are splendid instances where such interracial marriages have been highly successful and blessed and where the children and the relatives have suffered in no way whatever. Yet it must not be quickly dismissed as something which is of no particular concern. Two Christian people, deeply in love with each other and deeply in love with their Lord, are well able to overcome these obstacles, and to set up a Christian home of great inspiration to themselves, their children and their friends. However, patient Christian counsel and understanding are called for in every instance where it would appear that a marriage between two people of different colors is about to take place. But, under no circumstances dare the Gospel and its resultant Christian fellowship be denied to any young man just because that young man might want to marry our daughter. The Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ which cost God Himself the unspeakable agony of the Cross can have little meaning to anyone who would deny it to preserve family or culture, social status or position.

### ***A Happy Answer***

The question of what happens to congregations which carry on an interracial and intercultural ministry has a happy answer. In the first place, let it be known that there are many formerly white congregations, Lutheran and others, into which Negroes and other non-whites have been received and where the finest spirit of Christian fellowship, understanding and community prevails. There are also many instances of hitherto all-Negro parishes receiving into their life and labour members other than Negroes. The National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America reports



that, in three denominations having a total of 13,597 congregations there were, even several years ago, almost ten per cent which had non-white persons in their membership, and that this number is constantly increasing. Our own National Lutheran Council can report that of its total number of congregations about six per cent had non-whites some years ago, and there is every evidence that this number has recently been markedly increased. There are Lutheran congregations in Texas, California, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Illinois and many other states carrying on a splendid interracial and intercultural ministry. There are those congregations which have admittedly lost some members because the Negro, particularly, has been admitted into the membership. It is established however, beyond all doubt, that most of the threats to leave the congregation, if Negroes are admitted, seldom materialize.

### ***A New Lease of Life***

Not long ago a number of parishes within the National Lutheran Council were asked to reply to a questionnaire in which the effort was made to determine to what extent the congregations suffered because of their ministries to other peoples. It can be stated that there is an almost unanimous reply that the congregations, instead of suffering losses of any kind, have taken on a new lease of life and have apparently enjoyed a fuller outpouring of the Spirit's presence than ever before. Membership of whites and non-whites has increased, contributions have increased, church attendance has held up, if not shown marked improvement; participation in the celebration of the Sacrament has reflected the increased spiritual vigour and strength of the congregation. It can be said that in this instance, as in every other instance, the Church, which is the Lord's, prospers best when it follows obediently and fully the way and the will of the Lord.

The words of Robert E. Fitch in the *Christian Century* wraps this whole matter up rather neatly and gives it the proper place in the mind and heart of the people of God—"So, perhaps it is

time to start thinking about that possible Negro neighbor next door. For the Scriptures remind us that there is such a thing as 'fullness of time.' It is that moment in time when a thing must come to maturity; when the child that has long lain hidden in the womb must come into the light of day; when the old kingdom that had been corrupt and rotting for too long must at last fall; when the freedom and the brotherhood that are at first an inward spiritual possession must finally break forth into forms that are civil, political and social. And surely we in the United States now stand in the 'fullness of time' for accepting the Negro as our neighbor."\*

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews (Hebrews 1:1-2) tells us that "in many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." God still speaks to our fathers, to the world, to us. He speaks through His prophets of this hour as through those of an earlier day. He speaks through that Son Whom He has made Heir of all things. He speaks through His Church. Always must that Church seek to know that which it shall speak, and then it must speak in the clear, fresh voice of the prophet. It must speak to men about how they live with their fellow-men. It must rebuke and chasten and condemn. It must encourage, enhearten and inspire. It must have its own house in order that its voice shall be listened to as it condemns man's inhumanity to man, in whatever form that inhumanity may appear. It must keep itself unspotted from the world that its word of hope and life and victory shall gladden the hearts of men everywhere, and turn them to Him at Whose Name every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10).

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\*From "My Negro Neighbor Next Door," by Robert E. Fitch. Copyright 1957, Christian Century Foundation. Reprinted by permission. From *The Christian Century*, May 8, 1957.



**OFFICIAL ACTION OF THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL  
AND OF THE SEVERAL BODIES OF THE COUNCIL AND  
OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD—IN  
THE MATTER OF INTERCULTURAL AND INTER-  
RACIAL RELATIONS**

**NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL**

At the National Lutheran Council's Thirty-ninth Annual Meeting held at the Colton Manor Hotel, Atlantic City, New Jersey, January 29th-February 1st, 1957, the following statement was adopted:

**"HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS**

"The National Lutheran Council believes that under God humanity is essentially a unit and that in our land and under our form of government, the enjoyment of its common blessings, and the use of its public institutions, must be open to all its people on equal terms without restriction or reluctance, or humiliation to any, by reason of their culture, color, or other distinctive characteristics.

"The Council is grateful to God for the progress that has been made in recent months towards providing America's common benefits in dignity on equal terms to all our people of whatever color or national origin.

"The Council laments the sinful fact that there is still apathy among us with respect to these basic rights of free Americans, and reluctance to make them applicable to all, and even studied opposition to them; and acknowledging its own share in our common guilt, begs God's forgiveness of this our sin.

"The Council again points all the faithful to their duty to have done with this sin not only in our churches but everywhere; and to practice brotherliness and equality and courtesy always in all their human relationships; and to their concomitant responsibility to advance the cause of the Gospel of

love patiently and humbly and sympathetically in all areas where the disposition to stratify society, or deprive human beings of rights that belong to them under the Constitution and laws and government of our democracy, or to discriminate against the weak or exploit the ignorant, still sinfully reveal themselves.

"And, finally, the Council urges its participating bodies to charge our people in all our congregations to pray passionately to God, in Christ's name, that His Spirit may lead our nation at an ever accelerating pace toward the day when we in all areas of our national life shall be truly one people, in which all of us—together—and on one level before God and before the laws of the land, enjoy the blessings of free men in our free society."

## AMERICAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

On pages 13, 14, 19, and 52 of the Minutes of the Seventy-ninth Annual Convention of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church held at Muskegon, Michigan, August 14th-19th, 1956, the following action is recorded:

### Pages 13-14:

"With reference to Recommendation No. 8 the committee recognizes the importance of the inheritance of the A.E.L.C. for our lives, but that this must always be secondary to the greater and more permanent values with which God has blessed His church. 'Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.'

"RECOMMENDATION NO. 8. That the importance of utilizing the particular inheritance we count as a blessing in the congregations of the AELC should always be subjected to the greater and more lasting blessings God has in store when congregations sincerely practice the seeking of the kingdom of God first, trusting that then all these other things will be added."

### Page 19:

"Rev. V. S. Jensen asked for further clarification and received a satisfactory reply from Dr. Alfred Jensen. However, Rev. Richard Sorensen challenged his viewpoint, feeling we were misusing our heritage if we refused to minister to all groups.

"Rev. Stub stated that the intention of the committee was not to raise a question of policy, but to say something about the life of our church. This problem cannot be moved, but can be recognized. We have been conditioned by a certain kind of life; this determines where we will be able to serve as a church.

"Rev. Axel Kildegard moved to amend the recommendation to read: 'With reference to Recommendation No. 8 the committee recognizes the

importance of the inheritance of the A.E.L.C. for our lives, and that this must always be measured by the eternal values with which God has blessed his church. 'Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.' Seconded and carried. Adopted as amended."

Page 52 (Point 3 under Resolutions):

"Be it further resolved that we as children of one Heavenly Father and as brothers in Christ affirm our conviction that all men are equally precious in the sight of God, and therefore we as a Church, collectively and individually, must realize our moral responsibility to God for our actions affecting our neighbor and must examine our actions in the light of God's commands and must learn to show respect for all men as children of God and render justice to those with whom we deal."

## AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

On pages 196, 197, 198, and 199 of the official Minutes of the Fourteenth Convention of the American Lutheran Church held in Blue Island, Illinois, October 4th-11th, 1956, the following action is recorded:

### "(I). GENERAL PRINCIPLES

"We concur in and commend as soundly Christian the following statement on Segregation and Stratification submitted to the 1954 convention of the American Lutheran Church and referred by it to pastors and congregations for study and appropriate action:

#### *Segregation and Stratification*

"Segregation and social stratification, both based on essentially external differences, regrettably occur in Christian churches. Segregation grows out of man's prejudice and finds its support in differences in skin color or physical appearance. Social stratification arises largely from differences in levels of living or social standing. Such man-made distinctions of race and class belie the fundamental unity of the human race as God created it. The presence of segregation and stratification in the churches undermines the power inhering in the Gospel for uniting men through Christ in fellowship with the Father.

"In the Church of Christ, though each person possesses talents peculiarly his own, and each has his unique functions to fulfill, yet all persons are alike in being individually of sacred worth. All are created in the image of God; all stand convicted of sin and in need of redemption; all are invited by Christ to come to Him. St. Peter was moved, against his own inclinations, to confess, 'Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality' (Acts 10:34).



St. Paul, describing the Church of Christ, declared, 'Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all' (Col. 3:11).

"Wherever and whenever the churches help to foster race or class distinctions between people, and wherever and whenever they support attitudes of superiority or inferiority between persons, groups, or classes, they violate God's pattern. St. James warned against distinctions based on wealth or power, saying, 'But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors' (James 2:9).

"Christian churches unflinchingly, therefore, must condemn segregation and stratification as the evil fruit of natural man's pride and his arrogant assumption of superiority over those who appear to be different from him.

"Yet, Christian churches must recognize in race and class feelings the operation of the 'consciousness of kind' principle. The members of the various races and classes feel an essential oneness and a common bond with one another. Such voluntary associations of people have kindred interests and experiences are a normal part of the social order.

"Christ recognized and worked within the realities of the social structure of His day. He did not seek to eliminate all awareness of race and class differences. Instead, His goal was that the new spirit of God's love should govern the hearts and lives of members of every class and race. Thus would the normal human loyalties to race and class be given a nobler meaning. Race and class differences would become opportunities to serve personality needs and to enrich human life.

"The fact of race and class groupings lays upon the church the burden of a ministry that embraces all people without any semblance of exclusion. Under Christ's influence, pride and prejudice are renounced in race and class relations. Snobbery and discrimination are rejected. Jealousy, envy, quarreling and dissension have no place. The fruits of His Spirit, working in reborn lives, can bring joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control into the dealings of race with race and class with class.

"Were His Spirit truly to rule in men's hearts and lives, problems of race segregation and social stratification would disappear. The free and voluntary actions of men who love neighbor as self because of God's love for them will exceed in justice and equity the compulsion forced by decree upon the unwilling.

"It is incumbent upon Christians, their churches, and their church agencies, so far as it lies within their power, to practice to the full the realistic insights of their faith in dealing with issues of race and class. Pride and smug assump-

tions of superiority or privileged position draw the Master's censure today as they did for the sons of Zebedee.

"It is the unique task of the churches, shared by every Christian, to seek to bring the power of the Word and Sacraments to bear upon individuals, thereby changing their hearts and lives. This course alone promises the ultimate corrective for the evils of segregation and stratification.

#### "(II). APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES IN CHURCH POLITY

"A. It is the responsibility of each congregation of the American Lutheran Church to minister to the entire neighborhood and area in which it is located. This full ministry of the Law and Gospel includes the Lord's command to love, to seek out, to evangelize, and to minister to all persons and through the power of the Holy Spirit to bring them into full membership in the Church, with all the rights and privileges that inhere in such membership in the Body of Christ.

"B. The Church desires that each of its congregations accept as its field for potential harvest for Christ all of the people living in the area in which the congregation is located and that it employ all of its resources of money and manpower, paid and volunteer, to establish such an inclusive ministry. Neither economic, racial, educational nor cultural advantages or disadvantages should interfere with this objective. Anyone who will respond to the regenerating Gospel should be welcomed into the fellowship of the congregation.

"C. The occupancy of a particular area for a full-orbed and inclusive Gospel ministry, or the relinquishment of such an area ministry, is a question of program and strategy for the entire Church. Making the appropriate decision cannot be considered the responsibility solely of a particular congregation or solely of the Board of American Missions. It rather should be a joint decision mutually arrived at after careful consideration of the facts and circumstances affecting each individual situation and the congregations involved.

"D. Inasmuch as the district mission committee is charged to be alert to all mission opportunities in the district and inasmuch as it is kept currently informed on the policies, program and strategy of the Board of American Missions, the district mission committees shall be expected to counsel with congregations facing the problems and challenges of a changing community and to call upon the services of the Board of American Missions, the Division of American Missions of the National Lutheran Council, and such other specialized assistance as may be necessary. Their objective should be to help the congregation to see and to weigh the alternatives before it: whether to

leave its present field, whether to accept its opportunities for an inclusive ministry in its present field, or whether simultaneously to occupy and develop a new field while continuing to minister in its present field.

"E. The Church exists to win men to Christ and thus to restore lost souls into fellowship with the Father. Its purpose is not to build an institution nor to preserve a man-made cultural heritage. Whenever these latter aims supplant the former, or whenever the opportunities for a significant ministry have diminished because of a reduction in the number of people reached, there is no obligation upon the Church as a whole to provide financial support for this work.

### "(III). ADVANCING THE PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES

"A. All boards and departments of the Church share in the responsibility for teaching and practicing the concept of the inclusive ministry. Distinctions, preferment or exclusions based solely on economic, racial, educational or cultural advantages or disadvantages, unless the purpose be to overcome handicaps and limitations or to advance opportunities, have no place in the life of the church.

"B. In the training of pastors, alike in college and seminary, an urgent essential is to provide needed facts, to influence personal attitudes, and to shape a philosophy of life, all supporting the concept of the inclusive ministry. College and seminary faculties, under the leadership of the Board of Higher Education, need periodically to review how well they are accomplishing these goals.

"C. Acceptance by Church members of the concept of the inclusive ministry is imperative if the ideal is to become real. Toward this end the authors and editors of the Sunday School literature and the other teaching tools of the Church, the editors of the church papers, the leadership training promoters, and the officers and program directors of the youth, women's and men's auxiliaries of the Church, as well as all pastors, need to keep constantly in mind their role in providing facts, influencing attitudes, and shaping a philosophy of life.

"D. The Board for Christian Social Action can serve the interests of the entire Church by keeping currently informed on the major findings and significant literature in the broad area of race relations. It should channel to the program-developing boards those materials it believes pertinent to their work, from time to time prepare articles for the church papers, on request provide bibliographical aids to pastors, and as resources permit, offer literature in the broad field of race relations.

"E. In the matter of literature, the chief task at present appears not to

be the preparation of new tracts and pamphlets, but rather selecting from among and making wider use of those already available. A second task is the analysis and synthesis of present materials and the dissemination of the findings through the columns of the church papers. In these tasks the Board for Christian Social Action should take the lead.

"F. Hasty, or compulsive action, but also inaction, must be avoided. In any matter involving deeply-felt emotions, even among sincere Christians, what is the soundest, most God-pleasing, answer is not always immediately clear. Precipitate or ill-advised action—but also inaction—will weaken the ministry of the Church. After prayerful and sober discussion of the situation in the light of men's understanding of God's Word, if need be extending over a period of months or perhaps even several years, the path to travel will become clear. Then action must follow, even at the possible, if unlikely, risk of losing a few unconvinced dissenters to some other congregation. In the Lutheran tradition it is the right of the individual to determine with which congregation he will become a member and through which he will receive the Means of Grace.

"G. A congregation which wilfully and persistently resists accepting into its membership individuals who in faith and life qualify for membership in a Lutheran congregation, or which stubbornly clings to patterns of segregation and discrimination based solely on man's feelings rather than God's Word, should be the subject of the concern of the district president and executive committee of the district of which the congregation is a member."

## AUGUSTANA EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The official Minutes of the Ninety-seventh Annual Convention of the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church held at Moorhead, Minnesota, June 11th-17th, 1956, pages 387 and 388, contains the following resolution:

"8. Whereas, we recognize the growing tensions between the several races in our land and our Christian responsibility to work for better understanding,

"a. We reaffirm the position of our Church, that all people have equal rights before God, and are entitled to equal opportunities.

"b. We counsel our members to exercise love and understanding in all their dealings with persons of minority groups.

"c. We urge our members to use their influence in the securing of full rights of citizenship for all, and in discouraging any activity in their communities which would seek to circumvent orderly judicial procedure in the implementation of the Supreme Court decisions of segregation.

"d. We commend those who have sought to oppose wrong by non-violent means.

"e. We recognize that the evils of racial discrimination are not restricted to any one section of the nation, and we encourage our people to oppose all forms of racial discrimination whether they be found in the North or in the South.

"f. We point out to our members, especially those in the northern states, that discrimination in housing, real estate transactions, and employment is just as much a violation of Christian principles as discrimination in places of public assembly, public transportation, or schools.

"g. We again encourage our congregations to include all unchurched persons in their communities in their programs of evangelism without distinction as to race, color, or national origin.

"h. We particularly commend those congregations who have refused to abandon communities where major population shifts have brought large numbers of non-white persons into the vicinity of their churches.

"i. Where there are members of local churches in which racial integration is taking place, or is likely to take place, who are unwilling to continue membership in such congregations for this reason, we encourage such members to examine their consciences in the light of Holy Scriptures, and in the doctrines and decisions of the Church, specifically that God has created all men in His image, that Jesus Christ has given His life for the salvation of all men, that the Holy Spirit would call all men into the fellowship of the Church.

"j. We remind every congregation of its inescapable responsibility to bear witness in its locality to those truths, as well as the privilege of demonstrating that the Christian fellowship transcends barriers of race and class.

"k. We urge pastors of congregations to which such disaffected members may be seeking letters of transfer to encourage them to remain in their own congregations and to demonstrate Christian acceptance of and love toward those whom they have deemed different from themselves.

"l. We call the attention of the National Lutheran Council to the above resolutions."

## THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

A letter dated October 25th, 1956, from the Rev. O. H. Hove, General Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, reads as follows:

"Below is the resolution adopted at the 1956 Evangelical Lutheran Church General Convention relative to Racial Relations:

"Motion made and seconded that the Church Council Resolution on Racial Relations be incorporated into the minutes. Carried.

"WHEREAS, The plain message of the Gospel is that Christ is the Redeemer



of all peoples everywhere, and God does not in any measure distinguish between persons, and that in Christ the Christian is brother to every man:

"BE IT RESOLVED, That we humbly deplore our frequent failure to exemplify Christ as we ought in human relationships, and urge every member of our Church to continually examine his daily human contacts in the light of God's Word and pray His Spirit to use us more effectively to show that all men of all races and backgrounds are one family in His love."

## LUTHERAN FREE CHURCH

A letter dated July 16, 1957, from Dr. T. O. Burntvedt, President, Lutheran Free Church, states the position of the Lutheran Free Church as follows:

"When the Lutheran Free Church has not made an official statement in the matter of race relations and the Church's responsibility in reaching out to peoples of all colors and cultures, it is not due to indifference or to fear that this matter might stir up difficult questions within the Church.

"The Lutheran Free Church has to a large extent looked to the National Lutheran Council as an agency of the Church to make public statements on this and related subjects. I am, therefore, convinced even as I, personally, am in full accord with the statement on Human Relations adopted by the last annual meeting of the National Lutheran Council, so it also expresses the mind of the Lutheran Free Church on this subject."

## SUOMI SYNOD

A letter dated October 29th, 1956, from Dr. Raymond W. Wargelin, the President of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (Suomi Synod), reads as follows:

"The following resolution was approved by the Suomi Synod church convention held in Ashtabula during June 17-20, 1956:

"WHEREAS our Lord and Saviour has testified and said, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,' Mark 16:15, and

"WHEREAS Saint Paul speaking by the Holy Ghost has said that 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus,' Galatians 3:28, and

"WHEREAS the testimony of the Church of the Augsburg Confession to the twentieth century man retains the conviction that 'Christ Frees and Unites,' therefore BE IT RESOLVED, that the Lutheran Church-Suomi Synod, as His creation, and by nature inclusive, believes that true to her mission *she may not be racially or culturally exclusive*, and that the sin that so easily besets us can be undone by the grace of Christ who redeems and integrates."



## UNITED EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

A letter dated November 27th, 1956, from Pastor Lawrence Siersbeck, the Secretary of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, reads in part as follows:

"In response to a letter to the Convention asking consideration be given the matter of integration of races, the General Committee

"Moved that the Synod endeavor to apply the principles pertaining to the integration of races as stated in the Report of the National Lutheran Council. Seconded and Carried."

The Report of the National Lutheran Council referred to above appears on pages 19-20 of the 1956 Yearbook of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church and reads in part as follows:

"First of all, churches need to be reminded that these also ought to be reached and won and included in our fellowship. Then we have to learn how this can be done. Convinced that this is a frontier mission of the church, the Division Committee has studied it carefully during this year. It has now established the office of 'Secretary for Intercultural Outreach,' as a supplemental service of the Division, supported by voluntary contributions from the church bodies interested, and from balances in the treasury of Church Work in Negro Communities.

"It is apparent to many councillors that the Department of the Christian Approach to the Jewish People is a specialized aspect of Intercultural Outreach. The Division Committee is of the opinion, also, and has authorized the approach to the bodies now supporting the department with respect to securing their permission and approval to integrate the work now carried on by that department into this broader field as a special field service of Intercultural Outreach, with assurance that the interest in the program be maintained.'"

## THE UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

According to the official Minutes of the Twentieth Biennial Convention of the United Lutheran Church in America held in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, October 10th-17th, 1956, the following statement on desegregation was adopted:

"The ULCA, recognizing its deep involvement in the moral crisis confronting the U.S.A. in the current controversy over desegregation occasioned by the Supreme Court decision of May 17, 1954, affirms the Statement on Human Relations adopted by the Executive Board of the ULCA and the Board of Social Missions (April, 1951), and calls upon all its congregations

and people, exercising Christian patience and understanding, to work for the fullest realization of the objectives of that statement.

"We believe that Christians have special responsibilities to keep open the channels of communication and understanding among the different groups in this controversy. Our congregations are encouraged to contribute to the solution of the problem by demonstrating in their own corporate lives the possibility of integration.

"We furthermore state that due heed ought to be given the following principles by all and especially by those holding civil office, since they hold their power under God and are responsible to him for its exercise.

"(1) The public school system so necessary to the maintenance of a democratic, free and just way of life, must be upheld and strengthened.

"(2) All parties to the present controversy are in duty bound to follow and uphold due process of law, and to maintain public order."

## **A Statement on Human Relations**

*Since one of the disruptive forces which hinders the will of God is prejudice and discrimination in human relations, the United Lutheran Church in America sets forth the following propositions as the basis for study, discussion, experimentation, and concerted action by its congregations and members.*

### **I. CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES**

The Word of God, which the Church proclaims, reveals the righteous judgment of God upon sinful man, and sets forth the distinctive power of Christ to redeem him.

1. *God the Father is the Creator of all mankind.* We are made in His likeness. In the light of the common creation of all men, differences in physical characteristics or social background are only of incidental importance.
2. *God condemns all injustice, all hatred, all abuse and persecution of men.* His Judgment is revealed in the moral sickness of all men and in the torn fabric of our common life.
3. *God's atoning grace embraces every man.* Through His Son, Jesus Christ, God offers redemption to all. Christ died for all mankind. All men have equal worth in God's sight.
4. *Forgiveness through the Cross restores men to fellowship with God.* Through the remission of sins the way is opened to reconciliation between men. The love of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Cross, leads men to the deepest kind of human fellowship and mutual service. By the power of

the Cross men can overcome prejudice, discrimination, and exploitation which sinfully distort God's order and are the basic cause of social tension.

5. *God calls all men through the Gospel to Christian brotherhood.* Love, which flows from God, seeks to create justice and true community. Love for one's fellowmen is the necessary counterpart of love for God. God calls men to serve Him by serving each other.
6. *In God's providence Christians, different in racial, geographical, economic, and social backgrounds, may use their differences to contribute to the total enrichment of life.* No group is self-sufficient. By the exercise of justice and brotherhood men may cooperate in building true human community.
7. *The abiding love of Christ, our Lord, impels us.* We dare not separate ourselves from that love. Christ is the one Word of God, to whom we must listen and whom we must trust and obey in life and death. Thus Christians must face all human relationships in the spirit and power of Christ's love.

## II. HUMAN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In the light of these truths of Christian Faith the Church ought to help its people by offering a common witness to guide the individual conscience. Consistent Christian living requires that men shall seek to accord to each other the observance of the following rights and their matching responsibilities:

1. To possess and to respect the life and dignity of the human person as a child of God for whom Christ died.
2. To worship God without human distinctions in the Church, the Body of Christ.
3. To develop his God-given talents through education and cultural pursuits in order to use these talents in answer to God's call.
4. To establish a home in living space and housing conducive to a wholesome family life.
5. To occupy the place in economic life for which he is individually fitted, being free to advance therein on the basis of character and ability.
6. To share the privileges and obligations of community life, having equal access to all public services, including those related to health, education, recreation, social welfare, and transportation, and receiving equal consideration from persons and institutions serving the public.
7. To exercise one's citizenship in elections and all the other processes of government, having freedom for inquiry, discussion and peaceful assem-

bly, and receiving police protection and equal consideration and justice in the courts.

### III. PROPOSITIONS FOR CHRISTIAN ACTION

The foregoing declaration of Christian principles in the field of human relations and the enunciation of human rights and their attendant responsibilities derived therefrom, inevitably point toward Christian action. In working out the implications of our faith we face an awesome and urgent task in overcoming the evil tensions and injustices in human relations that obedience to God requires us to challenge. Christians ought to lay the following propositions to heart:

#### 1. *Acknowledge Our Sin*

Evil tensions and injustices resulting from racial and cultural practices must be faced before God. The unacknowledged sins of pride, fear, injustice and hatred have added a great moral peril to our present situation. Men must learn in repentance to seek God's atoning grace and renewing Spirit so that society may attain its true basis in God's order.

#### 2. *Accept Individual Responsibility*

Each Christian must realize his moral responsibility to God for his actions affecting his neighbor. Each must examine his actions in the light of God's commands. Each must learn to show respect to all men as children of God and render justice to those with whom he deals. This obligation is crucial today in relation to members of minority groups.

#### 3. *Begin in the Home*

Our families must nurture their members in Christian life and outlook so that people of different backgrounds are respected and treated with equal fairness and good will. Parents must be on guard neither to pass on to their children the sins of prejudice, nor to lead them in discrimination which is unbecoming to Christians. Rather it is the duty of parents to lead their children, by precept and example, in interracial cooperation and understanding.

#### 4. *Continue at Work*

All of us have special responsibilities in our daily work and economic activities to strive for justice for our neighbor, fair employment opportunities for all, and the removal of those economic handicaps from which minorities suffer. Christians in labor unions, business organizations, and industrial enterprises should take the lead in working for justice for oppressed groups.

Minorities likewise should seek to fulfill in their employment their responsibilities to their employers and fellow-workers, and to the groups affected by their work.

### 5. *Rally as Citizens*

Christians have special responsibilities as citizens to make society's laws and practices conform to God's order. Many human rights in which Christians believe, especially rights as to personal safety, citizenship, education, employment, and housing, are not being extended to all men. Christian brotherhood is impeded by practices enforcing segregation. God calls for, and human justice requires, speedy changes at every level and in every area of our society.

Community self surveys, to determine the areas where basic rights are being denied and what the opportunities for remedial action are, have proved useful. Fair Employment Practices Laws have proved generally beneficial in cities and states where they have been enacted. Citizens' groups have secured fair use of educational funds, just action in the courts, and fairer treatment in press and radio for minorities. Christians should work for such constructive changes, and for public support of democratically enacted laws which conform to Christian standards.

### 6. *Arouse the Church*

Since the Church is the Body of Christ, it must free itself from those cultural patterns of prejudice and discrimination which persist in our society and must manifest in its own life the principles and attitudes of Jesus. The Church must seek to be true to its own nature as a community of children of God inclusive of every race, nation, and class who confess Christ as Lord.

The Church's agencies and institutions should seek to serve all people fairly without distinction because of racial or cultural background. All its congregations should be centers of action to develop Christian fellowship across human barriers, and to instill the spirit of equality and Christian brotherhood. To this end the United Lutheran Church in America calls its pastors and people to earnest study and remedial action.

## LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

The Proceedings of the Forty-third regular Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, held at St. Paul, Minnesota, June 15th-25th, 1956, pages 757-759, contains the following resolution:

"WHEREAS, Every redeemed individual, regardless of race or ethnic origin, is most precious in the sight of God; and

“WHEREAS, It is the duty and desire of the church to bring the Gospel to these souls in order to win them for Christ; and

“WHEREAS, The church will measure its task and opportunities in the light of our Lord’s imminent return to judgment and will hold itself accountable to its Lord, looking forward to the great day of His appearing; when men of all nations and kindreds and tongues shall gather around His throne and praise Him eternally for having washed their sin-stained ‘robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb’ (Rev. 7:14); therefore be it

“RESOLVED, (a) That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod affirm its adherence to, and application of, the Scriptural principles of fact concerning race relations and church work as adopted by its representatives in conjunction with representatives of the sister synods, of the Synodical Conference, and as reported in the PROCEEDINGS OF THE FORTY-SECOND CONVENTION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNODICAL CONFERENCE OF NORTH AMERICA of August 12 to 15, 1952, to wit:

“‘1. God “will have *all men* to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” 1 Tim. 2:4.

“‘2. His plan of salvation embraces *the world*. “God so loved the *world* that He gave His only-begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. “He is the Propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the *whole world*.” 1 John 2:2.

“‘3. God’s grace in Christ Jesus should be proclaimed to *all nations* in accordance with the Savior’s Great Commission to His church: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Mark 16:15. “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Acts 1:8.

“‘4. In the execution of Christ’s command, viz., “to preach the Gospel to every creature,” no line of demarcation should be drawn relative to nationality, race, or color, “for there is *no respect of persons* with God.” Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; Acts 10:34.

“‘5. The *holy Christian Church*, the communion of saints, is the recipient of Christ’s injunction to “teach the nations to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded.” Not only did Christ instruct His church to “teach all nations,” but also to “baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” Matt. 28:19, 20.

“‘6. *The church’s chief function and task* is to spread the news of Christ and His salvation to men, women, and children, irrespective of any national



or race make-up, so that souls may be won for, and retained with, Christ, in whom alone they "have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Eph. 1:7.

"And be it further

"RESOLVED, (b) That in all problems which arise in connection with the application and conduct of these above-mentioned principles of Scriptures, all members of our church unreservedly obey the Savior's command 'that ye love one another,' and practice Christian charity, forbearance, and understanding with each other, knowing that the same Lord is Head over all, and that His Spirit dwells by Word and Sacrament in all the churches; and be it further

"RESOLVED, (c) 1. That all congregations of Synod regard all persons regardless of race or ethnic origin living within the limits of their respective parishes, and not associated with another Christian church, as individuals whom God would reach with the Gospel of His saving grace through the ministry of the local congregation;

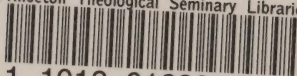
"2. That congregations operating in changing communities be encouraged to continue operations in those areas rather than relinquish their properties through sale to other denominations, and that the various District Mission Boards be encouraged to subsidize these congregations when this becomes necessary, so that the souls in those communities, regardless of race or ethnic grouping, may be won and served;

"3. That synodical institutions, agencies, and offices continue to make no distinction, based upon race or color, in their entrance requirements or employment policies; and be it finally

"RESOLVED, (d) That since Christians are constrained to do justice and love mercy, we acknowledge our responsibility as a church to provide guidance for our members to work in the capacity of Christian citizens for the elimination of discrimination, wherever it may exist, in community, city, state, nation, and world."



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